

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7657

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: MAY 10-12 SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTING ON LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN MEDIA IN AFTERMATH OF ELECTION HAVE STRESSED OPPORTUNITY THIS AFFORDS TO HEAL WOUNDS OF CIVIL WAR. MAJOR TASKS OF SARKIS SEEN AS RECONSTRUCTION OF COUNTRY AND RESTORATION OF SECURITY. HIS SERIES OF CONTACTS WITH ALL LEBANESE FACTIONS CONSTITUTE USEFUL BEGINNING. ASAD HAS CONGRATULATED SARKIS OFFICIALLY ON HIS VICTORY. COLUMNISTS WARNED LEBANESE AND PALESTINIANS THAT PLOTS AGAINST THEM WERE CONTINUING. END SUMMARY.
 2. SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE EXPRESSED RELIEF THAT LEBANESE HAVE MANAGED SECOND HURDLE IN EFFORT TO INSTALL NEW PRESIDENT, FOLLOWING ADOPTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND ELECTION OF ELIAS SARKIS.
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AND OPINE THAT FRANGIE RESIGNATION EXPECTED BY MOST OBSERVERS TO

TAKE PLACE NO LATER THAN TOMORROW. ONCE THIS HURDLE CLEARED, DAMASCUS RADIO NOTED, PARLIAMENT WOULD HOLD SPECIAL SESSION TO SWEAR IN NEW PRESIDENT. DOOR WOULD THEN BE OPEN FOR PROGRAM OF RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION. RADIO ADMITTED THAT "RESTORATION OF LEBANON WILL BE DIFFICULT, DELICATE AND SENSITIVE PROCESS, BUT NOT AN IMPOSSIBLE ONE. VOICE OF REASON HAD OVERCOME VOICE OF EMOTION" THROUGH ELECTION OF SARKIS, DESPITE EFFORTS TO OBSTRUCT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION, AND NOW TIME HAS COME FOR "EVERYONE TO LAY DOWN ARMS AND REPUDIATE VIOLENCE." MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM ASUK TO SARKIS WAS BROADCAST MORNING MAY 12 AND FOLLOWED REPORTS OF SUPPORT FROM ARAFAT, MUFTI HASAN KHALID AND NUMEROUS LEBANESE POLITICIANS FOR SARKIS.

3. MAY 12 AL-THAWRAH BANNERED: "LEBANESE PRESIDENT-ELECT INTENSIFIES HIS CONTACTS TO MAINTAIN SECURITY AND STABILITY. LEBANESE POLITICAL QUARTERS CALL FOR CONTINUATION OF RESISTANCE TO ZIONIST-IMPERIALIST SCHEME, AND EXPRESS THEIR APPRECIATION OF SYRIAN INITIATIVE AND SATISFACTION OVER ELECTION OF NEW PRESIDENT." TISHRIIN HEADLINED: "ASAD CABLES SARKIS CONGRATULATING HIM ON HIS ELECTION. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT REACHED IN LEBANON." TISHRIIN REPORTED EXCLUSIVELY THAT EFFORTS LED BY SARKIS TO RESTORE CEASEFIRE HAD SUCCEEDED YESTERDAY, AND NOTED A REPORT THAT PARTIES AGREED TO STATIONING PLA TROOPS ALONG CEASEFIRE LINES. PRESS NOTED THAT SARKIS HAD IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS ELECTION BEGUN RECEIVING KEY POLITICIANS INVOLVED IN LEBANESE CRISIS, INCLUDING FRANGIE, KARAME, EDDE, ARAFAT AND LONG LIST OF DEPUTIES AND OTHER FIGURES. CDESS MAINTAINED CRITICISM OF JUMBLATT, CITING STATEMENT BY DEPUTY TALHOUQ REMINDING DRUZE LEADER OF SYRIAN POLITICAL, MORAL, MILITARY AND MATERIAL SUPPORT WHICH HAD BROUGHT JUMBLATT TO HIS PRESENT STATUS AND CLAIMING THAT JUMBLATT'S POSITION IS SERVING ISRAELI SCHEME.

4. TISHRIIN COLUMNIST PRAISED "OPENNESS AND FLEXIBILITY" OF SARKIS, EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT HE COULD RESOLVE CRISIS, BUT WARNED THAT "DESIGNERS OF PLOT AGAINST LEBANON HAVE LOST A ROUND BUT PLANNING NEW METHOD TO WIN NEXT ROUNDS," SMASH PALESTINIANS AND UNDERMINE SYRIA. AL-BAATH CLAIMED THAT "ATTEMPTS MADE BY SOME TO BOYCOTT PARLIAMENT SESSION AND TO PREVENT OTHERS FROM ATTENDING CONFIRM THAT THEY AIM AT IMPLEMENTING MISSION OF U.S. ENVOY AND ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORKING WITH PLOTTERS OF SINAI AGREEMENT UNTIL BITTER END."

5. COMMENT: SYRIAN MEDIA HAVE GIVEN PRIMARY ATTENTION OVER PAST FEW DAYS TO LEBANESE CRISIS AND KING HUSSEIN VISIT. OVS LEBANON, PRESS HAS EMPHASIZED CONSISTENT PROGRESS ON POLITICAL TRACK AND STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO PATCH UP AND MAINTAIN SOME SEMBLANCE OF ORDER ON SECURITY FRONT. CRITICISM OF JUMBLATT AND TO A LESSER

EXTENT THE U.S. HAVE BEEN DISTINCTLY SECONDARY THEMES.

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